

us, three snails and two eggs each, barley soup along with mead³² and snow³³ (you'll pay for the snow first, although it melted right in the dish), olives, beets, cucumbers, onions, and a thousand other items no less sumptuous.³⁴ You would have heard comic actors or a reader or a lute player or, such is my generosity, all of them.³⁵ But you preferred the oysters, sow's wombs,³⁶ sea urchins, and dancers from Gades³⁷ at someone else's house. You will pay for this, though I haven't decided how. You behaved badly and spitefully to me and even to yourself. How much we could have joked and laughed and learned!³⁸ You can dine more splendidly at the homes of many other men, but not with more cheerfulness, more frankness, and less caution³⁹ than at my home. So, in conclusion, at least try a dinner at my house. Then, in the future, if you prefer to dine with others, well, keep making your excuses to me.

Recipe for Fish Sauce

Cookbooks were available for Roman cooks who wanted to try new recipes or learn old ones. One of the most popular ingredients in Roman cooking was a fish sauce called *garum* or sometimes *liquamen*. It was so popular, in fact, that large amounts were shipped to Roman governors, staff members, businessmen, and soldiers in the provinces and thus introduced to the provincials. Its popularity apparently even spread beyond the borders of the empire. Rumor has it that Worcestershire sauce is a descendant of *garum*, which was exported to India in the Roman period, and that British governors and staff members in India in the nineteenth century enjoyed it so much that they introduced it to Britain, or rather reintroduced it, since the Romans had probably carried it to Britain 1800 years earlier. Today Lea and Perrins, manufacturers of Worcestershire sauce, list anchovies as an ingredient. At any rate, *garum* was a favorite Roman sauce, and *garum* manufacture became a major industry in towns near the sea. *Garum* factories have been discovered, for example, at Pompeii. You could buy a jar of readymade *garum*, but if you wished to make your own, recipes were certainly available.⁴⁰

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Geoponica 20.46.1–5

Garum, also called *liquamen*, is made in this way. The entrails of fish are placed in a vat and salted. Also used are whole small fish, especially smelts, or tiny mullets, or small sprats, or anchovies, or whatever small fish are available. Salt the whole mixture and place it in the sun. After it has aged in

³² *mead*: *mulsum*, wine mixed with honey.

³³ Wealthy Romans used snow, brought down from the mountains, to cool their wine.

³⁴ *sumptuous*: ironic, since the food which Pliny mentions is quite modest.

³⁵ After-dinner entertainment consisted of slaves reciting a scene from a comedy or reading poetry aloud.

³⁶ Sow's wombs were considered a delicacy. See Martial's list of delicacies in selection 101. The Romans wasted very few parts of any animal they slaughtered.

³⁷ *dancers from Gades*: see selection 100.

³⁸ *learned*: Pliny had a puritanical, but traditionally Roman, streak in him. He thought he and his guests should be edified by the entertainment and by their dinner conversation. See his remarks on recitations (selection 364) and on chariot racing (selection 383).

³⁹ On the need for caution at dinner parties, see note 20 of this chapter.

⁴⁰ For the fourth century A.D. prices of fish sauce, see selection 168.

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the heat, the garum is extracted in the following manner. A long, thickly woven basket is placed into the vat full of the above-mentioned fish. The garum enters the basket, and the so-called liquamen is thus strained through the basket and retrieved. The remaining sediment is allec.⁴¹

The Bithynians make garum in the following manner. They use sprats, large or small, which are the best to use if available. If sprats are not available, they use anchovies, or lizard fish or mackerel, or even old allec, or a mixture of all of these. They put this in a trough which is usually used for kneading dough. They add two Italian sextarii of salt to each modius of fish⁴² and stir well so that the fish and salt are thoroughly mixed. They let the mixture sit for one night and then transfer it to a clay vat which is placed uncovered in the sun for two or three months, stirring it occasionally with sticks. Then they bottle, seal, and store it. Some people also pour two sextarii of old wine into each sextarius of fish.

If, however, you wish to use the garum at once, do not leave it in the sun, but rather cook it in the following manner. Take some brine which has been strained and refined, and test it by putting an egg into it to see if it floats; if the egg sinks, the brine does not contain enough salt. Put the fish into the brine in a new pot, add wild marjoram, and put it over a moderate flame until it boils, that is, until it begins to thicken a bit. Some people also add sapa.⁴³ After it has cooled, strain it again and again and again until it runs clear. Store in a sealed jar.

Numidian Chicken

Ancient Roman cooking differed from the cooking of modern Italy. Many of the ancient recipes include fruit, honey, and vinegar, and the cooked dishes must therefore have had a sweet-and-sour flavor. Liquamen is also an ingredient in most of the recipes; it is not certain, however, whether liquamen was the pungent fish sauce of the last passage used full-strength, a watered-down version of the fish sauce, or a general term for stock, broth, or other cooking liquid. The author or authors of the cookbook from which the following recipes are taken did not, unfortunately, give measurements. If you are willing to experiment, however, it is possible to use these recipes to produce some delicious dishes.

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Apicius, *Cookbook* 6.9.4

Clean the chicken, poach it, and then remove it from the water. Sprinkle with assofoetida⁴⁴ and pepper, and broil it. Grind together pepper, cumin, coriander seed, assafoetida root, rue, dates, and nuts. Pour over these vinegar, honey, liquamen, and olive oil. Stir. When it boils, add starch as a binder. Pour this mixture over the chicken. Sprinkle with pepper and serve.

Rabbit with Fruit Sauce

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Apicius, *Cookbook* 8.8.13

Cook the rabbit in wine, liquamen, and water, with a little bit of mustard, anise, and a whole leek. When the rabbit is done, prepare this sauce: pepper, savory, onion ring, dates, two damson plums,

⁴¹ *allec*: also spelled *alec* or *halec*.

⁴² *sextarii*, *modius*: see selection 168.

⁴³ *sapa*: must (new wine) or grape juice boiled until thick.

⁴⁴ *assafoetida*: a spice used today in North African and Middle Eastern cooking.

wine, liquamen, caroenum,⁴⁵ and a small amount of olive oil. Thicken with starch and allow the mixture to boil for a short time. Pour this fruit sauce over the rabbit in a serving dish.

Liver Sausage

106

Apicius, *Cookbook* 2.1.4

Grind together pepper, rue, and liquamen. Grill pork liver, and cut into bits. Combine the liver and spices, grind together, and mix well. Stuff the mixture into casings. Place one bay leaf in the center of each sausage. Hang the sausages to smoke for as long as you wish.⁴⁶ When you want to eat them, remove them from the smoke and grill them again.

Anchovy Delight without the Anchovies

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Apicius, *Cookbook* 4.2.12

Take as many fillets of grilled or poached fish as you need to fill a dish of whatever size you want. Grind together pepper and a little bit of rue. Pour over these a sufficient amount of liquamen and a little bit of olive oil. Add this mixture to the dish of fish fillets, and stir. Fold in raw eggs to bind the mixture together. Gently place on the top of the mixture sea nettles,⁴⁷ taking care that they do not combine with the eggs. Set the dish over steam in such a way that the sea nettles do not mix with the eggs. When they are dry, sprinkle with ground pepper and serve. No one at the table will know what he is eating.

Sweet and Sour Pork

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Apicius, *Cookbook* 4.3.6

Put in a pot olive oil, liquamen, and wine. Chop a dried shallot. Dice cooked pork shoulder. Add these ingredients to the pot. When this mixture has been well heated, grind together pepper, cumin, dried mint, and anise. Pour over them honey, liquamen, passum,⁴⁸ a little vinegar, and juice from the meat mixture. Combine the spices with the meat. Add fruit from which the pits and seeds have been removed, bring the mixture to a boil, and heat thoroughly. Crumble pastry over the mixture to bind it. Sprinkle with pepper and serve.

ILLNESS

The Romans were subject to most of the same illnesses and ailments that afflict us today. Their medical care, however, was far inferior, and diseases or conditions which are minor problems today were often life-threatening to the Romans. We cannot list here every sickness or disorder known to the Romans; the two passages that follow, however, inform us of personal reactions to illnesses, one temporary and one chronic.

⁴⁵caroenum: like sapa, a reduced wine, but less reduced than sapa.

⁴⁶On smoking meat, see selection 99.

⁴⁷sea nettles: Latin *urticae marinae*; perhaps jellyfish.

⁴⁸passum: a sweet cooking wine or raisin wine.